

SHIPS

A tall ship drops its anchor for Duxbury's sailing center



The Rose, whose namesake fought in the Revolution, is the largest active wooden tall ship in the world.

SHIPS
- 2 -

For Duxbury's new school, a ship comes in

By Jeff McLaughlin
GLOBE STAFF

DUXBURY - High hopes deserve a tall ship, and this week Duxbury will have both.

On Friday afternoon, the American Tall Ship Rose is scheduled to sail into Duxbury Bay and drop its anchor in Snug Harbor at about 3 p.m. for a weekend of festivities and fund-raising events to mark the formal launching of the Duxbury Bay Maritime School.

The pairing of the ship and the school is appropriate; both are non-profit educational enterprises serving all ages, both are dedicated to nurturing a love of the sea; both are ambitious and expensive projects largely reliant on broad-based community support.

"The Rose could have been just a great dockside attraction for us, but she had a greater mission than that," said Jan Williams, who directs the "HMS" Rose Foundation out of her family's marina, Captain's Cove Sea-

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port, at Black Rock Harbor in Bridgeport, Conn.

Her father, Kaye Williams, a longtime commercial lobsterman who has spent almost 20 years helping to revive Bridgeport's waterfront, first saw the 179-foot Rose in Groton, Conn., in 1984.

Rose was built in 1970 in Nova Scotia, to the exact lines of an 18th-century British Navy frigate, HMS Rose. The namesake ship, launched in King George II's reign, carried 24 to 32 nine-pound cannons when King George III sent her to maraud the colonial coast, from Massachusetts to Georgia, during the Revolutionary War. But the replica was undercapi-

talized from the first and maintenance was long neglected when Kaye Williams first saw the vessel.

But Rose was still a magnificent sight.

Rose's main mast is 130 feet high, and full complement is 17 sails totaling 13,000 square feet of canvas. The ship is 125 long on the deck, 32 feet wide in the beam, draws 13 feet of water, and displaces 500 tons. Rose is the world's largest operational tall ship of wood construction, Jan Williams said.

Naval history buffs, including readers of the historical novels about Captain Horatio Hornblower by

SHIP, Page 12



Alix Thorne tied a rope on a sail high above the deck of the "HMS" Rose, in Boston two years ago.

SHIPS
- 3 -

SHIP

Continued from Page 1

C. S. Forester or the Aubrey/Maturin series by Patrick O'Brian, find Rose especially appealing. HMS Surprise in the O'Brian books is nearly the same size as Rose, and similar in many ways, although Rose is a generation earlier in design.

Having fallen in love with the replica, Kaye Williams tried to rent Rose for a weekend harbor festival he was helping to organize for Bridgeport, his daughter recalled.

"The owner said you can't rent her, but you can buy her, and amazingly that's what he did," said Jan Williams.

"Believe me, we weren't even what you could call well-to-do, and when Dad bought her in '84 and had her towed from Groton to Bridgeport, she was a wreck, needing complete restoration," she said. "But she was still beautiful, and he decided she deserved to be restored and sent out to sail from port to port, representing Bridgeport and helping to keep the American maritime tradition alive."

Captain Richard Bailey, now vice-chairman of the American Sail Training Association in Newport, R. I., signed on to work with the foundation at the outset of the project, and he remains skipper of the Rose. Full restoration took six years, from 1985 to 1991, and cost well over \$250,000, most raised through private donations, Williams said.

In 1991, Rose - American now in every way, but still often called "HMS" Rose after her namesake - was certified as a Class-A size American Tall Ship, which meant she met the US Coast Guard's strict regulations for Sailing School Vessels.

Since then, Rose has made regular cruises all along the seaboard, from Canada to the Caribbean, carrying Captain Bailey and a professional crew of 20, along with 20 or so "trainees" who have paid \$750 to work as seamen for a week, learning how to hand, reef, and steer a square-rigger from another age.

Rose is the largest American Tall Ship open to the public for seagoing excursions.

Rose was built in 1970 in Nova Scotia, to the exact lines of an 18th-century British Navy frigate, HMS Rose.

"We're still paying mortgages," said Jan Williams, "and none of us derives any income from her, but my Dad's dream for Rose is alive and well. We get a lot of support from donations, from sail training income, and port visits."

In Duxbury, too, dreams are at the heart of the Duxbury Bay Maritime School. Last year, a group of sailors, boaters and other community activists decided that building a nonprofit maritime center would be the best way to forever preserve a piece of prime Snug Harbor waterfront for public access.

With donations now totaling more than \$2 million, the dreams are about to become reality.

"The community support has been just tremendous," said the maritime school's executive director, Mike Horn, 56, who retired last June after 30 years as coach of the Harvard College Sailing Team, then signed on last winter for the Duxbury post.

Horn and his wife live in Connecticut and will maintain their residence there, but during the sailing season will live in an apartment above the maritime center offices on Snug Harbor.

A champion sailor as a member of Harvard's Class of 1963, coach of championship teams, and a member

of Harvard's Sports Hall of Fame, Horn most enjoys simply turning people on to the sport of sailing.

"Sailing instruction will be at the heart of what we do," said Horn, who noted that for many of the students, adults as well as youngsters, their first sail this year will be their maiden voyage.

"That is just great," he said. "The most satisfying aspect of coaching for me is working with the novice, the kid who hasn't discovered his or her potential, and finds sailing a way to really do that."

"But what attracted me to Duxbury even more than that was the breadth of the future plans - the ecology courses, the marine history elements, the boatbuilding projects. I was trained as an historian," said Horn, who holds a Harvard doctorate in Arabic and Middle Eastern History, "and I've also worked as a boatbuilder. It all came together in Duxbury."

"If we can get a significant number really involved in all aspects - and I really think we will - then we'll really be a maritime center, not just a sailing club," he said.

Horn's first job was working for one of the crustier members of a well-known family of Portuguese fishermen in Provincetown. "That's how I learned about tides," Horn said, chuckling softly. "I was supposed to get a boat painted and ready to be launched on the tide, and it wasn't ready for the tide."

It was "impressed upon me that tides do not wait around," he said of the fisherman. "I never forgot."

While the original plan in Duxbury was to start out with sailing classes for children, and to add adult instruction later, Horn said, tremendous demand for both has changed that scheme.

"We'll actually get going with adult classes before school lets out for the year," he said. He noted that while Duxbury residents predominate in the early registrations, "We're not restricted to Duxbury. We have kids from Norwell, from Marshfield, from up Boston way, and of course grandchildren from all over the country."

5/10/1998

SHIPS

- 4 -

"It's interesting how the sign-ups went," he said. "It started out with 8-9-10-year-olds, then the 12-13-14-year-olds came aboard, and now we're getting 15-16-year-olds, who have apparently decided this is pretty cool. We're expecting over 400 kids this first summer."

The maritime center has a substantial fleet of boats to launch its programs. There are 20 8-foot prams, very simple and ideal for young children to handle and learn the basics; 20 Optimist dinghies, the same size but a bit more complicated and suitable for older youngsters; and 20 420s, double-handed sloops, with mainsail, jib, and spinnaker, and a trapeze for hiking out.

"The 420s are excellent for the high school level and the more advanced learners," said Horn. "We also have five Lasers, a very nice Olympic-class single-handed boat, two of them donated, and three on loan from the town, which used them in their sailing program that predated the maritime center. Plus five Flying Scots, 19-foot sloops, very stable, good teaching boats for adult instruction, and for our racing fleet. One of the Flying Scots was a private donation and four came from the US Merchant Marine Academy."

Rounding out the manifest are a Beetle Cat, a Force 5, and a Siren 17, three more donations from a community that seems determined to make this project the latest in a long line of community-based success stories.

"Eventually we'd like to become a regular center for high school sailing programs in towns around the area so not everybody has to go up to Community Boating" programs in Boston, Horn said.

Meanwhile, other components are also in the works. Battelle Laboratories, the Duxbury-based marine science division of Battelle Memorial Institute of Ohio, is a volunteer partner. Battelle scientists will be teaching marine ecology programs to the students at the outset of each two-week sailing session this summer, and also plan to give seminars on marine environment topics from September to May.

In addition, Horn said, other volunteers are stepping forward: US Power Squadron safety courses are planned for September, wooden boatbuilding classes for adults are in the works, the Duxbury Historical Society is expected to develop a nautical program in partnership with the maritime center.

"We've got a whole bunch of good ideas, not all of them fleshed out yet," Horn said. "In a way, complicated as the logistics are, the sailing is actually the easiest part to get going. But I am really encouraged at the prospects."